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SUBJECT: PRC/AFRICA: AFRICAN HEADS OF STATE HEADING TO CHINA EN MASSE FOR BEIJING SUMMIT OF THE FORUM FOR CHINA-AFRICA COOPERATION (FOCAC)

REF: A. BEIJING 7835

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BEIJING 00022370 001.2 OF 006

Classified By: Political External Unit Chief Edgard Kagan. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

11. (C) More than forty African Heads of State or Government are expected to travel to China for the Beijing Summit of the triennial Forum for China-Africa Cooperation ("The Beijing Summit") (Reftels A and B), November 3-5. Egypt President Mubarak, Nigerian President Obasanjo, South African President Mbeki, Sudan President Bashir and Zimbabwe President Mugabe plan to attend, among many others. The Beijing Summit represents the largest ever gathering of Chinese and African leaders. Beijing-based African diplomats assess that this event will highlight growing Sino-African ties and cement on the international stage China's role as a major player in Africa. The Beijing Summit will produce a "Beijing Action Plan" that will reflect Beijing's desire to institutionalize the FOCAC mechanism as China's primary vehicle for engaging Africa, indicate China will seek financial services penetration on the continent, offer an oblique commitment to African involvement in UN Security Council reform, highlight China's desire to be involved in shaping African counterterrorism initiatives and signal China's commitment to proactive public diplomacy in support of China's agenda in Africa. China is ramping up public diplomacy efforts in advance of the event. This cable provides a basic outline of FOCAC. We will report septel on the views and assessments of our contacts on how FOCAC will impact PRC-Africa relations.
End Summary.

12. (C) Beijing-based African diplomats from Nigeria, Egypt, South Africa, Liberia, Ethiopia, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Sudan, as well as contacts at the Beijing offices of the European Union, the UK Department for International Development (DfID), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the UNDP-sponsored China-Africa Business Council and China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) separately

discussed preparations for the FOCAC Summit with Poloff.

Big Names to Attend

¶3. (C) Response to PRC invitations to the Beijing Forum has been excellent according to the PRC MFA. At least forty Heads of State or Government of the forty-eight African countries with which Beijing has diplomatic relations are expected to attend. Attendees confirmed by Beijing-based African embassies include Egypt President Mubarak, Sudan President Bashir, South Africa President Mbeki, Nigeria President Obasanjo, Liberia President Johnson-Sirleaf, Zimbabwe President Mugabe, Ethiopia Prime Minister Zenawi, Uganda President Museveni, Gabon President Bongo, Zambia President Mwanawasa, Namibia President Polhamba, Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) President and African Union (AU) Chair Sassou-Nguesso, South African Development Community (SDAC) Chair and Lesotho Prime Minister Mosisili and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Niger President Mamadou. Libyan leader Moammar Qaddafi is the only notable absence thus far, according to our contacts. The PRC will foot the bill for in-China expenses for ten members plus the principle (and spouse) of each delegation, according to one Beijing-based African diplomat. While Foreign Ministers and Finance Ministers received official invitations and most will attend, many African countries expect additional ministers will join their delegations.

Outside Participation Limited

¶4. (C) Consistent with past practices, the PRC has invited the five African countries still in the Taiwan camp (Gambia, Burkina Faso, Sao Tome and Principe, Swaziland and Malawi) to participate as observers and each is expected to field Minister or Director General level representatives, according to our contacts. The PRC has limited outside involvement in

BEIJING 00022370 002.2 OF 006

the Beijing Summit to United Nations agencies and African regional entities. Outgoing UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has been invited but is not currently expected to attend due to prior scheduling commitments. The Beijing UNDP Office anticipates a number of key UN Agency Heads will participate.

The European Union informally inquired about participating as an observer but was informed that would not be possible. DfID sought to support a parallel Sino-African academic forum but that "fell by the wayside," according to a DfID contact. DfID may co-sponsor with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences an academic gathering to discuss Africa in Beijing in December. The UNDP-sponsored China-Africa Business Council will be present as a resource but will not host any events.

Beijing Summit Format

¶5. (C) Prior to the Summit, a "Senior Officials Meeting" will convene November 1 and 2, followed by a Ministerial November ¶3. Heads of State or Government attend the Beijing Summit on November 4 and 5. Several African Heads of State will hold State visits on November 6 or shortly thereafter, likely including President Mubarak, President Mbeki and President Obasanjo, according to Beijing-based African diplomats. MFA African Department Director-General and Secretary-General of the FOCAC Follow-Up Committee Xu Jinghu, Vice Minister of Commerce Wei Jianguo and Ethiopia's Deputy Foreign Minister will co-host the Senior Officials meeting and work with Beijing-based African Ambassadors and diplomats to revise the Beijing Summit's operative documents, the "Beijing Action Plan (2007-2009)" and the "Beijing Declaration." PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing, PRC Commerce Minister Bo Xilai and Ethiopian Foreign Minister Mesfin will host the Ministerial.

¶6. (C) The Beijing Summit will be held at the Great Hall of

the People. The draft schedule has President Hu Jintao greeting African Heads of State or Government on arrival the morning of November 4. State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan will chair the opening ceremonies. Speeches will be given by President Hu Ethiopia Prime Minister and co-Chair of the Beijing Summit Zenawi and Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) President and African Union Chair Sassou-Nguesso. In the afternoon, Premier Wen Jiabao will receive delegates at the "High-Level Dialogue between Chinese and African Leaders and Business Communities and the Second Conference of Chinese and African Entrepreneur," chaired by PRC Commerce Minister Bo Xilai. Speeches will be given by Premier Wen and Prime Minister Zenawi. The dialogue is designed to "match" Chinese and African businesses. African leadership will be represented ceremonially by five leaders selected by corresponding regional entities. Thus far, SADC Chair Mosisili and ECOWAS Chair Mamadou have confirmed participation. A banquet is also being planned. Wan Jifei, Chairman of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, the Chairman of the Union of African Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Agriculture and Professions and Chinese and Africa entrepreneurs will also address the dialogue participants. A welcoming dinner and "Gala Evening" will close the day. November 5th activities include a Roundtable of Chinese and African Leaders chaired by President Hu, a luncheon hosted by President Hu and a Roundtable of Chinese and African Leaders chaired by Prime Minister Zenawi. Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union Konare will address the latter session. President Hu will preside over the adoption of the "Beijing Declaration" (below) and offer closing remarks. Before, during and after the Beijing Summit, President Hu and Wen will host bilaterals and/or state visits with African Heads of State or Government.

Operative Documents

¶7. (C) The Beijing Summit will produce a "Beijing Declaration" and a "Beijing Action Plan (2007-2009)" (essentially a roadmap for Sino-African relations). Consistent with past practices, China will likely announce "surprise" benefits for Africa during the Beijing Summit, according to MFA officials and Beijing-based African

BEIJING 00022370 003.2 OF 006

diplomats. MFA contacts told us they are working on "something new," possibly involving health initiatives. The Africans anticipate new rounds of Special Preferential Treatment (SPT) tariff eliminations for Africa and, possibly, debt cancellation. African countries have been lobbying Beijing for SPT for exports in which they may have a comparative advantage. For example, Ethiopia hopes China will grant SPT for hides and skins as well as ground coffee. Finally, some smaller countries may seek to sign government-to-government contracts collateral to the Beijing Summit, although Beijing-based African diplomats from larger African countries have told us that the Beijing Summit will not be used to announce bilateral contracts.

The Beijing Declaration

¶8. (C) The draft "Beijing Declaration" is a four-page political statement containing platitudes about friendship and cooperation and the establishment of a "new type of strategic partnership" between China and Africa. African diplomats tell us that the Beijing Declaration is designed to celebrate fifty years of PRC-Africa ties, laud future cooperation and, in part, demonstrate to the West that Sino-African cooperation across the board is mutually beneficial. China's standard affirmation of the "five principles for peaceful coexistence" and the desire for "multilateralism and democracy in international relations" are mentioned. The draft states that "Priority should be given to increasing the representation and say of African

countries in the UN Security Council and other UN agencies." Defense cooperation is not mentioned as it is not generally within the scope of FOCAC. The declaration pledges China and Africa to increase high-level visits and conduct strategic dialogue, expand trade and investment, enhance international cooperation and handle any Sino-African frictions through "friendly consultation." Support for African democracy or human rights does not feature in either the Beijing Declaration or Beijing Action Plan with the exception of references to the United Nations Human Rights Council and the need to "eliminate double standards and the practice of politicizing human rights." As one Beijing-based African diplomat said, "these are not issues for China."

The Beijing Action Plan

¶ 9. (C) The current draft of the "Beijing Action Plan (2007-2009)" with "Chinese revisions" is a fourteen page document designed to "...chart the course for China-Africa cooperation in all areas in the next three years..." The document, which will be made publicly available after the summit, has five sections: Preamble, Political Cooperation, Economic Cooperation, Cooperation in International Affairs and Cooperation in Social Development. Most Beijing-based African diplomats note with chagrin that the Beijing Action Plan is short on specifics, informing us that PRC officials rarely reveal specific assistance or project commitments publicly and negotiate everything bilaterally. Highlights of the current draft are included in paragraph 17.

China Garners Respect, Support

¶ 10. (C) Most of Beijing-based African diplomats say that the Beijing Summit will generate significant publicity for Sino-African ties and herald for the international community China's role as a major player in Africa. African diplomats here underscore that African governments firmly believe that China respects their sovereignty, pointing out that the Africans enter into bilateral agreements with China with their eyes wide open. While the Africans are well-aware that the Beijing Summit could be perceived as a Beijing-directed PR exercise, they unanimously reject that characterization. China's business interests are overt (including its pursuit of natural resources and markets for its goods), Africa has benefited from Sino-African trade despite trade imbalances, China does not carry any colonial-era "baggage," provided important support for many African liberation struggles and China genuinely treats African leaders, governments and

BEIJING 00022370 004.2 OF 006

businesses with respect, according to our African diplomatic contacts.

Points of Contention

¶ 11. (C) Points of contention did arise in the drafting of the "Beijing Action Plan," according to our contacts. African diplomats expressed mild disappointment that African participation in drafting the "Beijing Action Plan" has been minimal and African input is not adequately reflected in the current draft, which is likely to change little before the Beijing Summit. The latest draft text was delivered to African Embassies in Beijing on October 12 and PRC officials convened a brief, two and a half hour meeting on October 13 to listen to African concerns. Beijing-based African diplomats do not expect to see another draft until the November 1 Senior Officials meeting.

¶ 12. (C) Several contacts told us that PRC officials sought to include reference to Chinese exports of artificial substitutes for chocolate, vanilla and other natural products. The Chinese dropped the references after meeting determined resistance from the Ivory Coast, Madagascar and

other potentially affected countries. Other contacts expressed disappointment that China did not give greater prominence to the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), despite a recently signed Memorandum of Understanding between China and the NEPAD Secretariat. In the only reference to NEPAD, the plan simply resolves to "further strengthen this cooperation and explore specific ways and areas of cooperation." The draft Beijing Declaration calls for increased "coordination and cooperation of the Action Plan with NEPAD..."

Egypt to Host in 2009

¶13. (C) PRC and Egyptian contacts tell us that Egypt will host the 2009 FOCAC, although that agreement is not reflected in the Beijing Action Plan. Beijing-based African diplomats are disappointed that the plan does not create a joint Sino-African Secretariat. Chinese authorities head the Follow-Up Committee and the African "Co-Chair" of each triennial FOCAC meeting is co-Chair in name only. Current Co-Chair Ethiopia has had little input in planning the Beijing Summit or drafting the operative documents, according to Ethiopian Embassy contacts.

Protocol Challenges

¶14. (C) With so many Heads of State and Government arriving simultaneously, the MFA is juggling a number of delicate protocol issues. With so many African delegations in town, Beijing hotel space is at a premium. The PRC offered Gabon President Bongo suites at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse, in theory in deference to President Bongo's status as China's oldest friend. Upon learning Bongo will stay at Diaoyutai, the Nigerian Embassy rejected China's offer of the Intercontinental for President Obasanjo. The issue is still being resolved but Liberian contacts tell us Liberian President Johnson-Sirleaf will also stay at Diaoyutai. President Mubarak will stay at the very luxurious Peninsula Palace Hotel. A French Embassy contact noted that several African counterparts complained that the PRC willingness to pay expenses does not cover costs at Beijing's most luxurious hotels, leaving African Embassies scrambling to get access to Diaoyutai.

Did Obasanjo Plan DPRK Trip?

¶15. (C) Two Beijing-based Nigerian diplomats separately told us that President Obasanjo planned to travel to the DPRK November 1 and 2 in advance of the FOCAC Summit but turned off the idea in light of recent developments. President Obasanjo is planning to travel to ROK on November 6, the day after the FOCAC Summit concludes. Our Nigerian contacts did not know why Obasanjo sought to travel to the DPRK but

BEIJING 00022370 005.2 OF 006

speculated simply that Obasanjo had never been there and wanted to see it as part of his long farewell tour in advance of 2007 elections.

Draft Beijing Action Plan Highlights

¶16. (C) Taken as a whole, the Beijing Action Plan presents a broad picture of China's expanding role in Africa. Of particular note are Beijing's desire to institutionalize the FOCAC mechanism as China's primary vehicle for engaging Africa, indications China will seek financial services penetration in Africa, an oblique commitment to African involvement in UN Security Council reform and China's involvement in shaping African counterterrorism initiatives and proactive public diplomacy designed to bolster China's agenda in Africa.

¶17. (C) The draft document divides Political Cooperation into subsections on High-level Visits and Dialogue, Consultation and Cooperation Mechanisms (FOCAC), Contacts Between Legislatures, Political Parties and Local Governments, Consular and Judicial Cooperation and Cooperation Between China and the African Union as well as the Sub-regional Organizations in Africa. Economic Cooperation includes sections on Agriculture, Investment and Business, Trade, Finance, Infrastructure, Energy and Resources, Science and Technology, Information, Air and Maritime Transport and Quality Inspection. Cooperation in Social Development includes Development Assistance and Debt Relief, Human Resources Development, Culture, Education, Medical Care and Public Health, Environmental Protection, Tourism, News Media and People-to-People, Youth and Women Exchanges. Specific highlights include:

-- A Chinese proposal for PRC and FOCAC Foreign Ministers to hold political consultations on the margins of the UN General Assembly the year after each summit to exchange views on major issues of common interest.

-- A pledge to enhance contact and cooperation between the Communist Party of China and friendly political parties and organizations in Africa.

-- "China encourages its financial institutions to set up more branches in Africa..."

-- With platitudes about mutual benefit, a pledge to conduct "joint exploration and rational exploitation of energy and other resources..."

-- "The two sides agreed to encourage their aviation and shipping companies to establish more direct air and shipping links between China and Africa."

-- "In reforming the UN Security Council, priority should be given to increasing representation of developing countries, African countries in particular, and consensus should be reached through full and in-depth consultation." NOTE: Contacts tell us Egypt pushed to include specific mention of Security Council reform in the Beijing Action Plan. The text is compromise language. END NOTE.

-- "The two sides will strengthen cooperation in anti-terrorism. They condemn and oppose terrorism in whatever form and are opposed to double standard (sic.). They support the United Nations and UN Security Council in playing a leading role in the international campaign against terrorism and in helping African countries improve their counterterrorism capability. China supports African countries to adopt a counter-terrorism convention and set up related research institutes."

-- China decides to "continue to provide concessional loans to African countries...to help (their) self-development...Cancel more debts contracted by governments of heavily indebted poor countries and LDCs in Africa that have become due and take an active part in debt relief operations within the multilateral framework."

BEIJING 00022370 006.2 OF 006

-- China decides to "Establish Confucius Institutes in African countries to meet their needs in the teaching of Chinese language and encourage the teaching of African languages in relevant Chinese universities and colleges..."

-- China decides to "provide anti-malaria drugs to Africa and set up a number of demonstration centers for prevention and treatment of malaria in Africa..." NOTE: MFA contacts earlier this year hinted China might launch artemisia-related programs in Africa through the Beijing Summit, but the Beijing Action Plan remains vague. END NOTE.

-- "The two sides support and encourage more report and coverage by their respective news media of the other side and will provide mutual assistance and facilitation of each other's news agencies in sending residence correspondents or conducting news reporting...The Chinese side is ready to provide assistance and facilitation of resident and non-resident correspondents from African news agencies..."

¶18. (SBU) China's official news agency, Xinhua, has ramped up Africa coverage in advance of the Beijing Summit, conducting "exclusive" interviews with African leaders such as Ethiopia Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and disseminating laudatory articles such as "Chinese community increasingly integrated into (South Africa's) 'rainbow nation'" and "Beijing Summit to boost new China-Africa Strategic Partnership."

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